

Pacific University CommonKnowledge

All CAS Faculty Scholarship

Faculty Scholarship (CAS)

2008

Art, Culture Change, Sustainability: The Work of Terry O'Day

Julie Alderson
Pacific University

Follow this and additional works at: <http://commons.pacificu.edu/casfac>



Part of the [Arts and Humanities Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Alderson, J. (2008). "Art, Culture Change, Sustainability: The Work of Terry O'Day." *The International Journal of Environmental, Cultural, Economic and Social Sustainability* 4(3): 131-137.

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Faculty Scholarship (CAS) at CommonKnowledge. It has been accepted for inclusion in All CAS Faculty Scholarship by an authorized administrator of CommonKnowledge. For more information, please contact CommonKnowledge@pacificu.edu.

Art, Culture Change, Sustainability: The Work of Terry O'Day

Description

Issues of sustainability are central to the life and work of artist Terry O'Day. Her deep concern with our dysfunctional relationship to the planet, and her strong desire to fundamentally alter that relationship, drive much of her activity. Through her current artistic practice, O'Day strives to generate substantial shifts in thought and action within her local community, thereby moving it toward a more sustainable future. While her methodology may not at first clearly identify itself as art, it does indeed have ties to her more traditional ways of art making, and illustrates how artists, as culture workers, can effect significant cultural change.

Disciplines

Arts and Humanities

Comments

First published in 2008 in Melbourne, Australia by Common Ground Publishing Pty Ltd;
www.CommonGroundPublishing.com.

© 2008 (individual papers), the author(s)

© 2008 (selection and editorial matter) Common Ground

Posted with permission. Further reproduction/distribution requires permission from Common Ground.

Rights

[Terms of use for work posted in CommonKnowledge](#).

The International
JOURNAL
of ENVIRONMENTAL,
CULTURAL, ECONOMIC
& SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Volume 4, Number 3

Art, Culture Change, Sustainability: The Work of
Terry O'Day

Julie Alderson

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ENVIRONMENTAL, CULTURAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
SUSTAINABILITY

<http://www.Sustainability-Journal.com>

First published in 2008 in Melbourne, Australia by Common Ground Publishing Pty Ltd
www.CommonGroundPublishing.com.

© 2008 (individual papers), the author(s)

© 2008 (selection and editorial matter) Common Ground

Authors are responsible for the accuracy of citations, quotations, diagrams, tables and maps.

All rights reserved. Apart from fair use for the purposes of study, research, criticism or review as permitted under the Copyright Act (Australia), no part of this work may be reproduced without written permission from the publisher. For permissions and other inquiries, please contact
<cg-support@commongroundpublishing.com>.

ISSN: 1832-2077

Publisher Site: <http://www.Sustainability-Journal.com>

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ENVIRONMENTAL, CULTURAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
SUSTAINABILITY is a peer refereed journal. Full papers submitted for publication are refereed by
Associate Editors through anonymous referee processes.

Typeset in Common Ground Markup Language using CGCreator multichannel typesetting system
<http://www.CommonGroundSoftware.com>.

Art, Culture Change, Sustainability: The Work of Terry O'Day

Julie Alderson, Pacific University in Forest Grove, Oregon, UNITED STATES

Abstract: Issues of sustainability are central to the life and work of artist Terry O'Day. Her deep concern with our dysfunctional relationship to the planet, and her strong desire to fundamentally alter that relationship, drive much of her activity. Through her current artistic practice, O'Day strives to generate substantial shifts in thought and action within her local community, thereby moving it toward a more sustainable future. While her methodology may not at first clearly identify itself as art, it does indeed have ties to her more traditional ways of art making, and illustrates how artists, as culture workers, can effect significant cultural change.

Keywords: Art, Craft, Sustainability, Permaculture, Education, Community Building

ISSUES OF SUSTAINABILITY are central to the life and work of artist Terry O'Day. Her deep concern with our dysfunctional relationship to the planet, and her strong desire to fundamentally alter that relationship, drive much of her activity. Through her current artistic practice, O'Day strives to generate substantial shifts in thought and action within her local community, thereby moving it toward a more sustainable future. While her methodology may not at first clearly identify itself as art, it does indeed have ties to her more traditional ways of art making, and illustrates how artists, as culture workers, can effect significant cultural change.

After receiving her MFA from Arizona State University in 1985, O'Day worked extensively as a craftsperson, in both jewelry and glass studios. Her efforts focused on creating fine crafts such as custom jewelry and decorative bowls. She exhibited her work across the country, and also taught various courses in studio art and craft areas. She also began a family; she and her husband had a son in 1994 and twin daughters in 1996. She ultimately took a position on the faculty at Pacific University in Forest Grove, Oregon, where she has worked since 1998. Throughout these years, O'Day's experience as a mother, juxtaposed with her role in academia, began to alter her ways of making art and thinking about the world.

When her children were young, O'Day found that their world was completely focused upon her, while her attention similarly concentrated on their immedi-

ate needs. Family and home became their center. Once her children grew older and started venturing out on their own (specifically, to school), O'Day's focus shifted from them to the world they were entering. She began thinking about their education, and what they would be when they grew up, and what things would be like when they got there. This was where she began to first truly realize some of the fundamental problems with modern civilization, particularly in the human relationship to the environment.

These concerns showed up in her craft work through a variety of pieces dating from the 1990s which related to ideas about continuity, birth, life and death, such as *Biological Clock*, *Contemplating My Navel*, *All That's Left*, and an anthropomorphized teapot with three cups following (a visualization of the artist and her three children).¹ However, as time went on, O'Day began to find that making even these objects became less and less meaningful to her. She found herself making such work and exhibiting it solely to support and advance her academic position, rather than from any real need in herself. While struggling with this reality, O'Day was still faced with the need to demonstrate activity in her field, in order to succeed in her academic environment.

In that spirit, O'Day submitted a Faculty Development Grant proposal in 2003. In an ongoing effort to maintain engagement with her traditional materials, O'Day determined to create a series of works in fused glass. The project was compelling to her, as

¹ The work O'Day does today continues this focus, albeit in a less obvious way. As the artist states, "I don't think of the work I do as trying to save the world or make it a better place for my children; it doesn't really seem like there is really any hope of that. Whether by choice or by circumstance, there will be big changes in how we do things and change of this scope will have to be traumatic for us in some way or another. By doing this difficult work I am engaged in, I hope to give my kids an example and serve as an inspiration to them when times get tough for them as it surely seems they will. I want them to learn that they can do anything if they put their minds to it and that, by working together with their community, they can achieve things that many would say were impossible. I also need them to know that I did what I could even if it doesn't amount to much in the end. So they won't be angry with me when all the salmon and tigers are gone." Email conversation with the author, 7 July 2007.



she hadn't worked in glass for some time, and it was her hope that the project would jumpstart her engagement back into her craft work. Instead, O'Day found herself unable to complete the project. In fact, she was completely blocked from even beginning it.

As she continued to struggle with her decreasing lack of interest in her established materials, O'Day's interest in environmental concerns increased. She began voraciously reading any material she could find on environmental topics, amassing a substantial volume of information and ideas, which she found increasingly overwhelming. In light of the artistic difficulties she was experiencing simultaneously, it is interesting that O'Day went to art in order to help her better process this wealth of information. Specifically, she began to research art that concerned itself with environmental themes.

O'Day revised her faculty development proposal to attempt to tie in her new thoughts. The new proposal clearly described this shift in O'Day's work. She noted in this text that, "up until this time, my artworks have followed the traditional 'object' format and are self-contained, finely crafted, and small. Their creation typically requires me to sit alone for long hours, focusing on work a few inches from my eyes, while engaged in very exacting detail-oriented processes."² She acknowledged that she had "become dissatisfied, both with the disassociation that my art objects have with place (they can be put nearly anywhere without changing the meaning of them), and with the limited audience associated with the museum and gallery exhibits where I show my work."³

O'Day's concept for a new way of working involved the creation of *Landing Places*, a site-specific sculptural project:

I envision a pathway tiled with impressed and fired clay slabs and a series of three to four 'landing places' where pathway walkers can stop to experience the artwork. These landing places will incorporate visual cues, objects, constructions, and other elements designed to increase awareness and appreciation of the human relationship to environment, community, and culture. Additionally, I will ask viewers to reflect on how the choices they make on a daily basis impact these relationships as well as provide inspiration for those who wish to make changes in the way they live out these relationships. The work will be available for public viewing during the times that the site is open to visitors. In addition, I intend to document the

work with photographs, drawings, and text descriptions, which will be posted to the university website as well as being displayed in a variety of public, educational, and artistic venues.⁴

This proposal clearly demonstrates O'Day's exposure to works which fall into the various categories of Land Art, Earth Art, Ecological Art, etc. In her research into art making practices focused on environmental concepts, she was made aware of a world of art that was entirely new to her. Sources for such work which were particularly influential included the Greenmuseum website (www.greenmuseum.org), an online museum site dedicated to environmental art projects, and *Ecovention; Current Art to Transform Ecologies*, an exhibition catalog for a 2002 exhibition on the topic of ecological art at the Contemporary Art Center in Cincinnati, Ohio.⁵

At the same time that she was thinking about working in a more expansive sculptural way, O'Day was also creating a series of highly detailed and realistic pencil drawings illustrating ecological issues. As O'Day notes, "drawings work well for processing information because the media isn't technical and it allows an open mode of thinking which can help with making mental connections. When using a tiny pencil point to cover large areas of paper multiple times, you have a lot of time to think and that was what I needed to do."⁶ For O'Day, the drawing series was an important outlet for her thinking at the time.

While *Landing Places* has not yet been completed, the drawings and general ideas in her head became the foundation for O'Day's *What's It Worth to You* exhibit at Pacific University's Kathrin Cawein Gallery of Art in the spring of 2005. O'Day included drawings such as *Natural Selection*, a triptych illustrating three chickens; a Red Jungle Fowl (from which all of our chicken breeds are descended), an example of a dual purpose heritage breed, and a factory chicken. The images themselves illustrated marked differences between the three, and were juxtaposed with texts describing the animals and the human use and manipulation of such species. Other drawings included *Target Species* (imaging and describing agricultural practices used to fight insect populations, as well as the negative effects of such practices), and *Progress*, which questioned the nature of human progress and "civilization." The exhibit also included a grouping of ceramic plates, bowls and mugs which O'Day had created, and which were displayed with the following text:

² Terry O'Day, Faculty Development Grant Proposal, December 2005.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ See Sue Spaid, *Ecovention; Current Art To Transform Ecologies* (Cincinnati: Contemporary Art Center, 2002).

⁶ This quotation comes from a lecture O'Day presented at Pacific University on her work. See http://www.pacificu.edu/academics/as/arts_humanities/art/faculty/to/presentation/v3_document.htm for the PowerPoint presentation for the lecture.

These functional ceramic pieces represent the work of a person you know who spent 20 years developing the skills needed to make them. The materials came from a ceramics supply house in Portland. I used a kick wheel to throw most of them and a gas kiln to fire them. They are here on this table to challenge you to think about your relationship to the things you need and how you go about getting them. If I were to set a price for them, I would have to consider the cost of materials, the cost of a studio and the required equipment, the time it took to make and sell them, and the time it took to learn the skills. In addition, I would need to consider how many of these things I could make in a year and the amount of money I need to support my lifestyle for a year. Because I am working on a small scale and I expect to live comfortably, it is likely that I would need to charge more for them than the price you would pay to a large, subsidized operation that is producing mass quantities and that pays people who do not live comfortably to make them. However, I am not selling these pots. If you would like to have one, you are going to have to think about the worth of the object, what the making of it represents and what of yourself you want to give for it. To make a trade, you are going to have to do some homework! Go to the *Orion Magazine* website and read the Wendell Barry article entitled "The Idea of a Local Economy," especially towards the end. When you have done that, choose the object(s) you want to trade for and leave something of equal value on the other table. Record your trade in the ledger book.⁷

While the *What's It Worth To You* exhibit clearly demonstrated a new direction in O'Day's work, it was still very much tied to traditional art making practices. Using her common media of ceramics and drawing, O'Day continued to express her ideas in a recognizably "art" way. Even the *Landing Places* project, though a radical departure for her, was not radically new per se. Contemporary artists have been crafting art objects and spaces in and with nature since at least the 1970s Earth Art of Robert Smithson and Michael Heizer. More important for the true departure in O'Day's work was the fact that at the time that she was preparing and installing *What's It Worth To You* she first saw the land that would become the B-Street project site, and was already hard at work on the proposals that would ultimately result

in the Forest Grove Community School. These activities would be O'Day's most unusual artistic expressions to date.

The B-Street Permaculture Project is located on several acres of land within walking distance of the Pacific University campus. The plot is owned by Metro, the governmental agency charged with land-use planning in the Portland metropolitan area.⁸ O'Day understood the ways in which the land might be used to support organic farming and permaculture practices, and it was through her leadership that Pacific University became involved with the site. She was very active in helping rent the property from Metro, and then in shepherding the site development and planning processes that brought the project on line. The university now uses the site as a demonstration ground not only for ecologically sound practices, but also for service learning opportunities for its students, and as a field station for scientific and environmental research. In addition, the site provides community outreach activities with various local organizations, such as community schools and Adelantes Mujeres, a program that supports low-income Latina women and their families by giving them the educational tools they need to start microenterprises such as organic market gardens. Overall, the project's goal is to serve as,

An educational resource center that promotes awareness of and action towards incorporating sustainable practices into individual, institutional and civic operations. The site's mission is based on the permaculture principles of care for the earth, care for the people, and fair share of resources, as applied through systems thinking design methods.⁹

O'Day sees it as an ideal manifestation of Pacific University's liberal arts program, bringing together a wide variety of campus groups in the interests of making connections across disciplines.

While this institutional, educational function appealed strongly to O'Day, the underlying desire in developing the project was related to a more basic concern with food and food production. O'Day understands our connection to food as one of the most important issues within the sustainability problem. Our lack of connection to the earth as a provider of sustenance, and our contemporary reliance on monoculture and factory farming are key to our deeply unsustainable culture. For O'Day, using the permaculture project to educate others in the Forest

⁷ O'Day, *What's It Worth To You?* essay, 2005. O'Day received a wide variety of object in return, including jams, jellies, handmade candles, a photograph, and even a "living wreath" table decoration, sent to her a full year after the close of the exhibition.

⁸ Metro is an elected, regional governing body charged with managing the growth, infrastructure, and development of the greater Portland metropolitan region.

⁹ See <http://www.pacificu.edu/as/enviro/perm/outreach.cfm/>

Grove community about these issues was crucial to advancing a model of sustainable living.

O'Day's interest in developing the Forest Grove Community School was similarly driven by her perception of a deep need within her community. Her ideas were articulated in her presentation to the school district which initially proposed the creation of the charter school:

My current work seeks to raise awareness and understanding of the complex nature of the challenges we face as well as promote community action towards cultural change that will enable us to address these challenges in a positive way. What better way to engage the community in that conversation than through a school that has at its core the goal of developing the value of stewardship in its students and, through them, the community that they are part of? We all care deeply about preparing our children for the future and school is one of the primary ways our culture does this. In bringing this proposal before you, we have engaged in the process of asking our community to actively evaluate and question the content of the curriculum we use in our schools in relation to the future our scientists and economists predict for our children.¹⁰

For O'Day, education is perhaps the most important tool in advancing sustainability, certainly through the children who receive that education, but also through their parents, who are the true powerbrokers. This reality is borne out by O'Day's own experience as a mother.

O'Day's own children had attended a charter school in the neighboring city of Hillsboro. Through her activities with that school, O'Day began to recognize the institution's various difficulties and limitations. She also came to know that community members in her own city of Forest Grove had tried for years to impact their local school district, to no avail. O'Day determined that the best way to provide what she saw as an appropriate education for children in her community was to develop a new charter school. She felt that attempting to change the existing system was futile. She notes that, "As an artist I would never rework someone else's painting. I knew that I needed to approach the problem in a new way and start fresh."¹¹ She used her contacts at Pacific University to learn more about practical concerns such as board development and committee work, while simultan-

eously making connections with relevant stakeholders, such as other people with children in her community who had similar concerns.

From the spring of 2005 on, O'Day was intimately involved in the development of the project, which was originally identified as *Our School*. As the school's original Statement of Intent indicated, the goal was to create,

An alternative, theme-based, small-school experience that practices innovative pedagogy. Through the practice of place-based pedagogy, we will link and integrate the experiential learning model to an environmental studies theme with an emphasis on local, sustainable food production and community activism.¹²

The school is intended to incorporate elements such as multi-age grouping in the classrooms and alternative assessment tools rather than letter grades. The development process was extremely complex, and included the crafting of grant proposals and a charter agreement with the local school district, hosting community meetings, identifying appropriate facilities, curriculum development and teacher hiring. The school opened in the fall of 2007, with 140 students, grades one through nine, and seven teachers. Plans are in place to increase the student population over time, and to eventually offer a pre-K through high school curriculum.

O'Day's process, in this social activist mode, is particularly informed by the concepts of connectivity, sustainability, and systems thinking. Her description of her methodology is particularly helpful in understanding this:

When I do my work, I create an image in my mind of an organization (or composition) that mimics the completeness that I see in nature's systems. As I work to develop these organizations, I am always trying to build in complexity, redundancy, and diversity since I know that these are some of the tools that nature uses to ensure the stability of a system. Fritjof Capra describes 'systems thinking' as way to understand the rules that govern the development of stable systems in nature. Because the crafts discipline has a very practical aspect to it, I see myself as a practicing 'systems builder' who is continually refining my understanding of how to build effective and stable communities that

¹⁰ Partial text of O'Day's 30 October 2006 presentation to the Forest Grove School District.

¹¹ Conversation with the author, 20 April 2007.

¹² For the full text of the Statement of Intent, see http://www.pacificu.edu/academics/as/arts_humanities/art/faculty/to/wiwnov12/charter.html.

are working to effect the culture change we need to be able to survive into the future.¹³

O'Day's ultimate role is to serve as a facilitator of sorts. She does not see herself as actively imposing her vision on others, but instead she encourages the participants in her works to make them their own. As she states, "Once a person has joined the organization (or artwork), they change the trajectory of it. I don't direct them; they act in their own best interest and they can work to influence the others in the organization towards their ends."¹⁴ The methodology is similar to that of an orchestra conductor. In an orchestra, the musicians have well developed skills and artistic expressions of their own. They bring their own creativity to the performance. It is the conductor's job to harness that creativity and purpose into a unified whole. The product is collaborative and serves the goals of all who participate.

This focus on the needs of those involved in the work is truly central to O'Day's concept. She sees her role as merely providing people opportunities to do what it is that they already do, or wish to do. She sees this as similar to using a particular clay in a ceramic work for its specific properties. It functions as it is made to do if she sets up the structure effectively. For her socially engaged work, this need to attract the correct participants and allow them to function as they are meant to is where the strength of the system most clearly shows itself. As O'Day notes,

I think that in order for the work to truly address the needs of the 'client' (the community as represented by active members of that community), the client must dictate the direction of the artwork to serve itself. The work does not serve me; it's existence is a result of a need that is expressed by those in the community who are working to address that need. The work goes to where the energy is, not vice versa. The work functions to provide a matrix that connects those who are working towards common goals in a synergistic way. My work amplifies their work.¹⁵

With the B-Street project, for example, O'Day recognized a need to provide more sustainable agricultural practices in her community, and she involved the members of her community most supportive of such goals. The strong connection to Pacific University demonstrates the effective pulling in of people and institutions who can both support the project and

benefit from it. The University helps fund the B-Street project, and it also uses it in its advertising, including images and articles on the university webpage, stories in its *Pacific* magazine, and in materials for prospective students. It presents the project as an educational resource which demonstrates the University's broad commitment to environmentalism. In this, the project both is served by, and serves, one of its major stakeholders.

All this may seem more politicking than craft, and certainly less than art (with a capital "A") to some. Yet, one of the deep ironies of O'Day's development is that while her traditional craftwork led her to a vastly expanded concept of craft methodology, that evolution has in fact turned her into a "real" artist, something she never before perceived herself to be.

In graduate school, O'Day worked with other students who strongly connected their production to social issues, particularly feminism. She found that this type of thinking did not engage her at all. Even before working out in the world as a craftsperson, she already saw herself as one, rather than as a fine artist. In fact, when O'Day was offered her position on the art faculty at Pacific University, she warned her colleagues, "I am not an artist!"

However, as her work has evolved, and her understanding and experience of art has grown, O'Day recognizes that her work is indeed allied with the artists' camp. She found a like mind in Michelangelo, who saw the artist as a visionary and was himself able to see what was "in" a stone before even touching it: "In every block of marble I see a statue as plain as though it stood before me, shaped and perfect in attitude and action. I have only to hew away the rough walls that imprison the lovely apparition to reveal it to the other eyes as mine see it."¹⁶ O'Day recognizes her ability to "see" a social system within a community, and then to pull that system out and make it visible to those around her, as a result of her artist's way of thinking and perceiving.

Beyond the tradition-bound sculpting techniques of Michelangelo, O'Day's work is also related to that of some of the most interesting contemporary artists today, who are similarly working in modes that do not demonstrate traditional art techniques. As a recent example, the September 2007 issue of *ARTnews* presented a front page article entitled "25 Trendsetters," which included work by artists whose production falls outside of the traditional object-based systems (and which, coincidentally, have quite similar concerns to O'Day's work). The article "Gardens of Earthly Detritus" describes the work of

¹³ Email conversation with the author, 10 June 2007. Fritjof Capra is a founding director of the Center for Ecoliteracy, an organization committed to fostering knowledge about ecology and systems thinking in educational institutions. See <http://www.fritjofcapra.net/>.

¹⁴ Conversation with the author, 2 May 2007.

¹⁵ Conversation with the author, 3 May 2007.

¹⁶ See http://thinkexist.com/quotation/in_every_block_of_marble_i_see_a_statue_as_plain/148720.html.

Fritz Haeg, who is “less concerned with creating art objects per se than with generating ideas and prototypes that can extend beyond their original intentions and meanings.”¹⁷ The image used to illustrate his work is *Edible Estates Regional Prototype Garden #2*, from 2006, which is one of a series of projects Haeg undertook to help homeowners turn their suburban front lawns into gardens of edible food. An article on Pedro Reyes discusses his work, which the artist refers to as “social sculpture,” and particularly highlights a project in Mexico City. In December of 2007 he transformed gallery space at the Museum of Mexico City into a production facility for an ergonomic pedicab he designed. The work responds to current interest in combating pollution in Mexico City.¹⁸

Both of these “trendsetting” artists work in non-traditional ways – making objects that stand outside of the commercial fine arts system, that are highly collaborative in nature, and that are more focused on social concerns than individual artistic expression. They have inherited a tradition that includes the work of artists such as Joseph Beuys and Mel Chin (artists highly influential for O’Day), whose works draw a fine line between art and environmental activism. Contemporary art in general, in its postmodern mode, stands in contrast to the modernist focus on the individual. In this, it frees artists to work more expansively and to engage with the world around them in new ways.

O’Day argues that to reach her potential audience, which is not necessarily an art-oriented one, it is indeed necessary to work more expansively. As she notes,

I always had problems with making work for a selected, educated, privileged audience that had access to museums and galleries. So elitist! What about art work for the masses? I’m trying to talk to an audience that is unlikely to be receptive to art in ‘art’ form; therefore, the art must be unrecognizable as art in order to engage that audience.¹⁹

And so, as with many other contemporary artists who have a desire to make a real social impact far beyond the white cube of the gallery, O’Day’s methodology has had to develop as well. In order to succeed as an artist, and to make successful art objects, she had to become a new type of artist.

O’Day identifies the success of her work in the same way she sees success in an object-based craft object. Success is determined by how well the work

ultimately functions. Unlike a traditional object, however, this new type of structure necessarily continues to grow and change. The question is how well it sustains itself over time. In the end, O’Day’s work is neither a product or a process. Rather, her intent is to reorganize culture and to have a permanent effect on her community. The work and her activity create a type of viral effect – they get in and realign everything.

The artist compares this effect to that of ice-nine or prions. Ice-nine, a fictional material described in Kurt Vonnegut’s novel *Cat’s Cradle*, is a crystal structure of water with a much higher melting temperature than ordinary ice. In contact with water, ice-nine seeds the material and freezes it immediately, well above water’s normal freezing point of 0° Celsius. In the novel, the material eventually locks up the entire planet. Similarly, prions radically alter the material around them, in this case functioning as diseased proteins that replicate themselves in an infected host, corrupting the healthy proteins they come into contact with. The most recognized prions are those that cause brain diseases such as Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (also known as BSE or “Mad Cow Disease”).

Such comparisons may seem destructive, even deadly. O’Day’s descriptions can indeed incorporate a strong sense of aggression. When describing the Forest Grove Community School, she says, “the school is a cancerous lesion we hope will metastasize.”²⁰ When asked about the source of this aggression, the artist is quick to explain, “Because I’m mad!” O’Day hates that she lives in a culture where she can’t make choices, where it’s hard to do anything that doesn’t have some destructive impact. For many environmentalists, it is this anger and aggression that can act as a catalyst to effect change. Thinkers such as Derrick Jensen advocate for the idea that civilization needs to be destroyed as soon as possible, before more species and landscapes are demolished (the longer we wait, the more is lost). O’Day is not that aggressive, but she does feel a similar sense of urgency.

In the end, it is the underlying function of the ice-nine/prion metaphor that most appeals to O’Day. In her mind, it is through such processes that deep and fundamental change takes place. You must enter into a system to alter it. As O’Day states, “You have to fit into the shape. Once you lock in, you destroy it and change the form.”²¹ And once you are able to begin to effect that change, the momentum that builds is unstoppable. O’Day has helped create the B-Street

¹⁷ Paul Young, “Gardens of Earthly Detritus,” *ARTnews* 8 (September 2007): 131.

¹⁸ Anuj Desai, “Building a Better Pedicab,” *ARTnews* 8 (September 2007): 141-142.

¹⁹ Conversation with the author, 2 March 2007.

²⁰ Conversation with the author, 9 July 2007.

²¹ Conversation with the author, 2 May 2007.

project, as well as the Forest Grove Community School, and they are now beginning to grow together. Students at the school use the permaculture site as an integral part of their education. The pieces which were fit into the original community form are now expanding outward, joining, and generating fundamental changes.

O'Day's work is all a part of a dynamic grassroots revolution that is happening all over the world, according to social activist Paul Hawken. Hawken's essay, "To Remake the World," describes his act of collecting thousands of business cards at the environmental talks he gives across the country. According to Hawken,

Over the years the cards mounted into the thousands, and whenever I glanced at the bags in my closet, I kept coming back to one question: did anyone know how many groups there were? At first, this was a matter of curiosity, but it slowly grew into a hunch that something larger was afoot, a significant social movement

that was eluding the radar of mainstream culture.²²

After analyzing his assemblage of cards, and further researching such organizations across the country, Hawken came to the conclusion that "there are over one million organizations working toward ecological sustainability and social justice. Maybe two."²³

For Hawken, "The movement can't be divided because it is atomized – small pieces loosely joined. It forms, gathers, and dissipates quickly. Many inside and out dismiss it as powerless, but it has been known to bring down governments, companies, and leaders through witnessing, informing, and massing." This is what is occurring in Forest Grove, Oregon, as well. Terry O'Day has worked to create important catalysts for change in her own backyard, and as others around her generate their own nodes, the groups will eventually grow together, generating a mass of change. Parts that exist separately will begin to form a systematic, symbiotic, and synergistic whole, based on O'Day's foundation of artistic and cultural activism.

About the Author

Julie Alderson

Dr. Julie Alderson serves as an Assistant Professor of Art History, as well as the Director of the Kathrin Cawein Gallery of Art at Pacific University in Forest Grove, Oregon. Her specialization is in the area of American and European Art, 1860 to the present. Her particular research interests include topics in modern sculpture, public art, and Land Art, as well as museum methodology and theory.

²² Paul Hawken's, "To Remake the World" was published in the May/June 2007 issue of *Orion* magazine. For the essay online, see <http://www.orionmagazine.org/index.php/articles/article/265/>. For more on this topic, see Hawken, *Blessed Unrest, How the Largest Movement in the World Came into Being and Why No One Saw It Coming* (New York: Viking, 2007). Hawken is known for founding Smith & Hawken, as well as other ecologically-minded businesses. His text, *The Ecology of Commerce* (New York: Collins, 1994), addresses issues of ecology and capitalism, and was voted best college text on business and the environment in 1998.

²³ Ibid.

EDITORS

Amareswar Galla, The University of Queensland and Director, Pacific Asia Observatory for Cultural Diversity in Human Development.

Mary Kalantzis, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, USA.

EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD

Shamsul Nahar Abdullah, University of Malaysia Terengganu, Malaysia.

Wan Izatul Asma, University of Malaysia Terengganu, Malaysia.

Dang Van Bai, Department of National Cultural Heritage, Ministry of Culture and Information, Vietnam.

Richard M. Clugston, Center for the Respect of Life and the Environment, and University Leaders for a Sustainable Future, Washington DC, USA.

Bill Cope, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, USA; Common Ground.

John Dryzek, Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University, Canberra, Australia.

Robyn Eckersley, Department of Political Science, University of Melbourne, Australia.

Steven Engelsman, Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde, The Netherlands.

John Fien, RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia.

Steve Hamnett, University of South Australia, Australia.

Paul James, Globalism Institute, RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia.

Mary Kalantzis, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, USA.

Nik Fuad Nik Mohd Kamil, University of Malaysia Terengganu, Malaysia.

Lily Kong, National University of Singapore, Singapore.

Thangavelu Vasantha Kumaran, University of Madras, India.

Jim McAllister, Central Queensland University, Australia.

Nik Hashim Nik Mustapha, University of Malaysia Terengganu, Malaysia.

Helena Norberg-Hodge, The International Society for Ecology and Culture (ISEC).

Peter Phipps, Globalism Institute, RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia.

Koteswara Prasad, University of Madras, India.

Behzad Sodagar, Lincoln School of Architecture, University of Lincoln, Brayford Pool, Lincoln, United Kingdom

Judy Spokes, Cultural Development Network, Melbourne, Australia.

Manfred Steger, Illinois State University, and The Globalism Institute, RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia.

David Wood, University of Waterloo, Canada.

Lyuba Zarsky, Globalism Institute, RMIT, Australia, and Global Development and Environment Institute, Tufts University, United States.

Please visit the Journal website at <http://www.Sustainability-Journal.com> for further information about the Journal or to subscribe.

THE UNIVERSITY PRESS JOURNALS

International Journal of the Arts in Society

Creates a space for dialogue on innovative theories and practices in the arts, and their inter-relationships with society.

ISSN: 1833-1866

<http://www.Arts-Journal.com>

International Journal of the Book

Explores the past, present and future of books, publishing, libraries, information, literacy and learning in the information society. ISSN: 1447-9567

<http://www.Book-Journal.com>

Design Principles and Practices: An International Journal

Examines the meaning and purpose of 'design' while also speaking in grounded ways about the task of design and the use of designed artefacts and processes. ISSN: 1833-1874

<http://www.Design-Journal.com>

International Journal of Diversity in Organisations, Communities and Nations

Provides a forum for discussion and builds a body of knowledge on the forms and dynamics of difference and diversity.

ISSN: 1447-9583

<http://www.Diversity-Journal.com>

International Journal of Environmental, Cultural, Economic and Social Sustainability

Draws from the various fields and perspectives through which we can address fundamental questions of sustainability.

ISSN: 1832-2077

<http://www.Sustainability-Journal.com>

Global Studies Journal

Maps and interprets new trends and patterns in globalization. ISSN 1835-4432

<http://www.GlobalStudiesJournal.com>

International Journal of the Humanities

Discusses the role of the humanities in contemplating the future and the human, in an era otherwise dominated by scientific, technical and economic rationalisms. ISSN: 1447-9559

<http://www.Humanities-Journal.com>

International Journal of the Inclusive Museum

Addresses the key question: How can the institution of the museum become more inclusive? ISSN 1835-2014

<http://www.Museum-Journal.com>

International Journal of Interdisciplinary Social Sciences

Discusses disciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches to knowledge creation within and across the various social sciences and between the social, natural and applied sciences.

ISSN: 1833-1882

<http://www.Socialsciences-Journal.com>

International Journal of Knowledge, Culture and Change Management

Creates a space for discussion of the nature and future of organisations, in all their forms and manifestations.

ISSN: 1447-9575

<http://www.Management-Journal.com>

International Journal of Learning

Sets out to foster inquiry, invite dialogue and build a body of knowledge on the nature and future of learning.

ISSN: 1447-9540

<http://www.Learning-Journal.com>

International Journal of Technology, Knowledge and Society

Focuses on a range of critically important themes in the various fields that address the complex and subtle relationships between technology, knowledge and society. ISSN: 1832-3669

<http://www.Technology-Journal.com>

Journal of the World Universities Forum

Explores the meaning and purpose of the academy in times of striking social transformation.

ISSN 1835-2030

<http://www.Universities-Journal.com>

FOR SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT

subscriptions@commonground.com.au